

**2010 State Damage Prevention Program Grants Progress Report**  
**Funding Opportunity Number: DTPH56-10-SN-0001**  
**CFDA Number: 20.720**

**Award Number:** DTPH56-10-G-PHPS15

**Project Title:** Public Utilities Commission of Ohio Damage Prevention

**Date Submitted:** August 18, 2010

**Submitted by:** Ohio Utilities Protection Service & Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

**Specific Objective(s) of the Agreement**

Under this grant agreement, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio will establish a comprehensive stakeholder team to develop a cohesive underground damage prevention education program. Activities will include identifying target audiences, appropriate messaging, and marketing strategies and delivering the educational program to key damage prevention stakeholders.

**Workscope**

Under the terms of this grant agreement, the Grantee will address the following elements listed in 49 USC §60134 through the actions it has specified in its Application.

- *Element (1):* Participation by operators, excavators, and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of methods for establishing and maintaining effective communications between stakeholders from receipt of an excavation notification until successful completion of the excavation, as appropriate.
- *Element (5):* A process for fostering and ensuring active participation by all stakeholders in public education for damage prevention activities.

**Vision 2020: Ohio State Damage Prevention Stakeholder Initiative**

In 2010, a public safety grant was awarded to the State of Ohio and will be administered by the PUCO and O.U.P.S. The goal of this grant is to reduce damages to Ohio's underground infrastructure which, in turn, will reduce risk to Ohio workers, businesses and homeowners, and to our environment. To attain this goal, O.U.P.S. seeks to gather stakeholder insight and to use that insight to produce appropriate marketing tools to increase public safety awareness using a cohesive message – thereby effectively competing with the “noise” in the marketplace and increasing messaging efficiency amongst the varied stakeholder groups identified and their diverse audiences.

This comprehensive research agenda will meet the following objectives:

- 1) Identify common key stakeholder messages related to public safety and utility protection
- 2) Identify and validate specific stakeholder constituent audiences.
- 3) Test key messaging concepts and inform strategic and tactical marketing approach to communicate to stakeholder audiences.
- 4) Provide baseline damage prevention perceptions statewide.
- 5) Allow key stakeholders to contribute to a common agenda to protect the underground infrastructure and promote public safety in the State of Ohio.

## ***Research Methodology***

**Phase I – Qualitative Research:** At least one in-depth interview and one dyad, triad, or small group discussion with members of each of the twelve stakeholder groups identified, yielding twenty-four interviews and/or group discussion for synthesis and analysis.

The qualitative research will meet the following objectives:

- a.) Gather stakeholder insights and perspectives regarding underground infrastructure and public safety.
- b.) Garner key messages, strategies, approaches, content, and preferences for the broader “excavator community” and discover specifically to whom (i.e. what key audiences) they communicate.
- c.) Learn how often these messages are being disseminated to their audiences, using what media/method and why.

**Phase II – Quantitative Research:** To reach statistical relevance, a total of 400 respondents representing the stakeholder constituent audiences will be interviewed. We estimate our research universe to equal approximately 5 million homeowners and approximately 60,000 municipal representatives, locators, member facility owners, employees, excavators and O.U.P.S. members. A sample of 250 homeowner respondents will be surveyed (150 by telephone and 100 by web survey). This sample of 250 will yield a confidence interval of 95 percent +/- 6.2 percent when projecting to the universe of potential respondents within the universe of Ohio homeowners identified by O.U.P.S.

Additionally, 150 respondents representing all other stakeholder constituent audiences - including the municipal representatives, locators, members, facility owners, employees, excavators and O.U.P.S. members - will be surveyed by telephone. A sample of 150 will yield a confidence interval of 95 percent +/- 7.9 percent when projecting to the universe of potential respondents within the constituent audiences identified. Respondents will be weighted according to the size of their relative universe.

The goal is to measure the effectiveness of past communications and messaging strategies by surveying a statistically relevant sample of the audiences identified in Phase I. This information will be used to identify common messages of importance in order to create engaging educational tools and to identify and use the most effective methods of message dissemination.

Phase II research will yield the following deliverables:

- a.) Validate/test messaging themes that emerged in Phase I.
- b.) Corroborate dissemination methodologies uncovered in Phase I.
- c.) Authenticate messaging efficacy via stakeholder constituent audiences (i.e. “what is the constituent’s level of awareness?”, “what are the key barriers to acceptance of existent messaging?”).
- d.) Uncover ineffective messaging techniques/styles.



### ***Tool Development***

At the conclusion of the research phase of this project, the data collected will be used to create an appropriate tool(s) to increase public safety awareness using a cohesive message. Specifics of this tool(s) (i.e. video, radio commercial, direct mail piece) will be determined based upon data analysis.

Currently, the contract submitted by the research firm has been signed and work on the beginning phase of the project is underway. Stakeholders involved in the qualitative research phase have agreed to participate and interviews will soon be scheduled. The instrument for this phase is also in the design stages. It is intended that the qualitative research phase will conclude by mid-September.

It is expected that the quantitative research phase will begin immediately following the conclusion of the qualitative phase. Data collection is expected to occur between September 27, 2010 and October 11, 2010.

The research phase will conclude and final reports/analysis will be provided to the project coordinator by October 31, 2010.

Elements One and Five will clearly be implemented in the research phase of this project, as all stakeholders involved in the damage prevention process will discuss their implemented public safety activities and audience reactions to those activities. Both of these Elements will also continue to be addressed during the tool creation phase of the project.

### **Mid-term Financial Status Report**

The mid-term financial report has been sent as a separate attachment to the AA.